INDIA CONFIRMS KILLING OF 39 WORKERS KIDNAPPED BY IS

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India has confirmed the deaths of 39 construction workers kidnapped by Islamic State militants (IS) in Iraq.

Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj said the DNA of 38 workers matched with bodies found in a mass grave.

Since the kidnapping in Mosul in 2014, the Indian government had always maintained that they were alive.

India was engaged in prolonged efforts for their release and even sought Iraq's help in locating them after Mosul was recaptured last year.

Ms Swaraj added that it was highly likely that the body of the 39th worker had also been found but she said that it was a 70% match.

She confirmed the deaths while speaking in the Rajya Sabha (upper house of parliament) on Tuesday.

Last year, Ms Swaraj had told parliament that there was no evidence that the workers had been killed by IS.

Thirty-one of those abducted were from the northern Indian state of Punjab, while the others came from Himachal Pradesh and Bihar in the north, and West Bengal in the east.

Her announcement immediately caused the hashtag #39Indians to start trending on Twitter and among those who tweeted were Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh and Indian MP Shashi Tharoor.

In 2014, India had issued a travel advisory telling its citizens to not travel to Iraq, and those already there to leave.

India has been active in negotiating the release of other citizens captured in the Middle East. A group of 46 Indian nurses were freed in July 2014 by IS after being trapped in Iraq for more than a week.

http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-43467956

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